

University of Groningen

Review of Noel Malcolm, *Aspects of Hobbes*, Oxford 2002

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Published in:
Renaissance Quarterly

IMPORTANT NOTE: You are advised to consult the publisher's version (publisher's PDF) if you wish to cite from it. Please check the document version below.

Document Version
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

Publication date:
2004

[Link to publication in University of Groningen/UMCG research database](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

Nauta, L. (2004). Review of Noel Malcolm, *Aspects of Hobbes*, Oxford 2002. *Renaissance Quarterly*, 57(2), 622-623.

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scholar vacillating between the officially taught Aristotelian doctrine and a secretly preferred Platonism and Hermetism. Finally, the development of the so-called *philosophia italica* should be mentioned, which referred to the metaphysics of the Eleatics as the antique source of wisdom signifying a more down-to-earth variant of the *prisca sapientia*.

Mulsow's collection of essays gives a broad idea of the reception of Hermetism in the high and late Renaissance, one which corrects the inevitably one-sided statement of Frances Yates. The particular attraction of the book consists in the successful supplementing of various points of view. However, the influence of Hermetism after Casaubon, especially in the natural philosophy of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, deserves more detailed treatment. Moreover, care needs to be taken in the labor of historical reconstruction. There is no use in adding to an already complex study further subjects, such as the mathematics of Giordano Bruno, and in verifying possible echoes of the hermetic tradition in Bruno by undifferentiated references to the works of the author, as happens in Muslow's essay and notes. In spite of these critical remarks, Mulsow's book offers an in-depth view into the scientific life of the second half of the sixteenth century, one which is most useful for historians of philosophy and philologists.

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Noel Malcolm. *Aspects of Hobbes*.

Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2002. xii + 644 pp. index. bibl. \$49.95. ISBN: 0-19-924714-5.

Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) is primarily regarded by most modern philosophers as a political philosopher and as the author of *Leviathan* (1651). But while Hobbes himself (as well as his contemporaries) certainly recognized the importance of his contributions to this field, he would have been utterly disappointed had he known that centuries later he was remembered mainly for this aspect of his work. He regarded himself also, and perhaps foremost, as a natural philosopher, devoting much of his time and energy to the study of nature. Geometry also occupied an important role in Hobbes's life, though here he was less successful and received scornful remarks from more competent mathematicians. More influential and important were his heterodox and daring interpretations of the Bible, which have been viewed as the beginning of modern biblical criticism. In addition, he translated classical works of Thucydides and Homer and was at home in literary and rhetorical studies. To a seventeenth-century scholar, these interests were not always as far apart as they are now for us. Hobbes's biblical exegesis and theological arguments, for example, were meant to support his political ideas, his translation of Thucydides had more than just scholarly aims (it showed "how incompetent democracy is," as Hobbes later said), and his political philosophy was closely tied to his ideas on human psychology, which in their turn were based on his mechanistic philosophy of nature.